

Leonard W. Jerome Mansion  
32 East 26th Street  
New York  
New York County  
New York

HABS No. NY-5470

HABS  
NY,  
31-NEYO,  
77-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
801 19th Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006

## LEONARD W. JEROME MANSION

HABS

NY,

31-NEYO,

77-

Address: 32 East 26th Street; southeast corner of Madison Avenue and East 26th Street; New York, New York County, New York.

Present Owner: Mansion Associates.

Present Use: Now being demolished; to be replaced by a high-rise office building.

Statement of Significance: The Jerome Mansion is one of the few remaining examples of an upper-class New York City townhouse of the 1860's. This complex of buildings, which was very elegant when built, originally consisted of a residence, stables, and private theater. It was part of the exclusive residential neighborhood surrounding Madison Square and was built by the well-known banker and broker, Leonard W. Jerome, who was Winston Churchill's grandfather. Its subsequent tenants, various private city clubs, continued its original associations with a luxurious way of life.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of property: The Jerome Mansion originally occupied Lots 33 through 37 in Block 855; however, these lots have been combined and are now numbered Lot 37.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
5/19/1863 Liber 883, page 55.	King Sarah R. widow of King James G.	Jerome Leonard W.
5/19/1863 Liber 883, page 57.	King James G. (Exrs. of)	Jerome Leonard W.
10/16/1865 Liber 942, page 338.	Fitzhugh William A.	Jerome Clara Hall
10/16/1865 Liber 942, page 339.	Jerome Leonard W.	Fitzhugh William A.

8/18/1904 Liber 101, page 319.	Thomson David Geraud F. Trustees Will of Jerome Clara Hall dec'd Wylls Co. Title Guarantee & Trust Co.	Agreement
10/25/1913 Liber 187, page 98.	Lincoln Trust Co. Trustee Will of Jerome Clara Hall dec'd Frewen Clara Leslie Leonie Blanche	Manhattan Club
3/31/1966 Liber 37, page 196.	Manhattan Club	Nadel Sally
3/31/1966 Liber 37, page 204.	Nadel Sally	Mansion Assocs.

2. Date of erection: According to Trow's New York City Directory, Leonard W. Jerome first occupied the house in 1865, and the stables were probably built at the same time. Mathew Dripps' Plan of New York City, From the Battery to Spuyten Duyvil Creek of 1867 shows both the stables and the house, but not the theatre, later located between these two buildings. However, The New York Times of March 22, 1867, spoke of "recent entertainments . . . given at Mr. Leonard W. Jerome's elegant little private theater." It therefore seems likely that the theatre was built late in 1866 or early in 1867.
3. Architect: Contemporary obituaries written for Thomas R. Jackson credit him with the design of the Jerome Mansion. Jackson (1826-1901) was born in London but moved to New York in 1831, where he worked in the office of Richard Upjohn. He designed the old Academy of Music in New York and Tammany Hall and later became Superintendent of Federal Buildings in New York.
4. Original plans and construction: The Jerome Mansion is actually a group of three buildings which form a continuous facade along East 26th Street. Occupying the western two-fifths of the lot is the house proper, and on the eastern portion of the lot are the stables, originally with a ball-room above. Between these two buildings is a connecting structure, originally a private theater, which was built shortly after the house and stables were completed. The Jeromes occupied the Mansion as a residence for a few years, but contemporary accounts, Frank Leslie's Illustrated

Illustrated Newspaper (May 9, 1868) and The New York Times (April 1, 1868), relate that Jerome built the complex for the American Jockey Club, of which he was a vice-president. Rider's New York City (1924) states that the house was "erected at a cost of \$200,000."

5. Alterations: The first account of alterations to the Mansion is given in a description of the formal opening of the Union League Club, which leased the Mansion as a club house [The New York Times, April 1, 1868] :

Important alterations have been made to adapt this building to its present purposes. The exterior of the building has been long since described in the Times, and the only change here to note is that the Club monogram has been placed on the large lamps at the main entrance on Twenty-sixth street. Within, no expense has been spared in furniture and appropriate ornamentation, and the various floors are subdivided as follows: on the first floor are the visitors' reception-room, the reading room, the art gallery, the billiard room, the cloak and hat room, the bar and the ten-pin alleys. On the second floor is the theatre, which it is proposed will be used for the more important meetings of the Club and hired out for first-class lectures, reading, &c., &c. On this floor also have been constructed a number of private dining-rooms for the Club members. On the third floor is the main parlor, looking on Madison avenue, and from the windows of which the fine balcony running along that side of the building is reached. This parlor is fitted up in magnificent style, and hung around with portraits of patriots, dead and alive, and those of some friends of the Union abroad, and Cropsey's painting of "The Field of Gettysburg." Adjoining the parlor are the library, the trophy room and a fine, spacious saloon by which the theatre is reached. On the three remaining floors are bed-rooms, elegantly furnished, intended for the occasional accommodation of members and for the purposes of hospitality. In the basement are numerous offices, kitchen &c., &c., and an engine to supply heat to the building and power when required. The remodelling and refitting of the interior cost \$50,000.

On May 12, 1875, J. Morgan Slade, an architect with offices at 346 Broadway, received approval for Application 555 from the Buildings Department to raise the club house from six to seven stories, and to replace the mansard roof with a flat tin roof having galvanized iron cornices and gutters, and to install an elevator, at a cost of "about \$40,000." Three sheets of drawings, now badly torn, were submitted with the application. Evidently the work of raising the building was never carried out.

In A History of the Union League Club of New York City (1952) the authors state that while the Union League Club occupied the Mansion from 1868 to 1881, the "only notable external changes are the removal of some charming iron balconies on the Madison Square side and the addition of a fifth story with windows, whose design bears the brand of the 1870's." This book also states that Jerome himself paid for this additional story and for the installation of an Otis passenger elevator. This account has, however, been contradicted by other sources. Rider's New York City (1924) states that the building at that date still had "an elaborate iron veranda." Exactly what is meant by the addition of the fifth story is not known, perhaps only finishing off the attic under the mansard roof.

In 1883 the University Club leased the building and the following year began alterations. On January 30, 1884, architect Charles C. Haight, of 111 Broadway, submitted Application 97 with drawings to the Buildings Department requesting "to raise the two story connecting front and rear building one story." The building was to be three stories when raised, and the work was to cost "about 5000." This application concerns the portion of the complex that had been Jerome's theater, now used as a dining room; the additional story was to be used for kitchen facilities. The application also proposed "to construct new staircase as shown on drawing from third to fourth floor of front building." The application was approved February 4, 1884. The Buildings Department reported that the work was begun February 6, 1884, and completed by April 26, 1884.

On February 16, 1884, Haight requested and was granted approval to alter partitions in front and rear buildings and "to improve the lower flight of rear staircases." James W. Alexander, author of A History of the University Club of New York 1865-1915, states that on May 5, 1884, fees were paid to C.C. Haight for "reconstructing" the club house.

On June 30, 1886, Haight submitted Plan 1492 to the Buildings Department for various alterations to cost "about \$9000." Drawings were included and appear to indicate the following changes. Window sills were to be lowered in the "New Dining Room," the former theater. New windows were to be cut in the south wall, minor partitions installed and removed, and a brick elevator shaft constructed. The work was begun on July 16, 1886, and completed on October 30, 1886.

On August 14, 1889, McKim, Mead & White submitted Plan 1602 with drawings to the Buildings Department for interior alterations. Four new doors were to be cut on the second floor and one on the first floor; these were to have either iron lintels

or arches. In addition, balconies were to be installed. Work was begun on August 15, 1889, and completed on September 25, 1889. Masonry work was to be done by G.W. Cook and carpentry by Joseph Cams [Cains?] at a cost of "150."

The Manhattan Club moved into the Mansion in 1899. On July 27, 1906, Denby & Nute, Architects, submitted Plan 2114 to the Buildings Department for the following work to cost "twelve hundred dollars":

Two partitions are to be removed where shown in Locker Room. Two new windows pierced through party walls. New lockers and redecorations.

This work was begun on December 1, 1906, and completed by December 13, 1906.

In 1915 Hoppin & Koen, of 244 Fifth Avenue, supervised major alterations to the building. They submitted Alteration Application 1040 with drawings on May 7, 1915; the following work was to be done at an estimated cost of \$25,000:

The principal alteration [sic] are the re-arranging of partitions on the Easterly end of Building, Second floor, and on the 4th, 5th and 6th Stories. This re-arrangement is generally for the purpose of accommodating new plumbing . . . .

A new flight of stairs will be erected over the present stairs, and will run from the 5th to the 6th story.

It is proposed to form four new window openings in North wall, of 4th story, lighting Bedroom No. 10, and Bathroom No. 7.

Also new windows in North wall, 5th sty. to Bathrooms 12 and 13.

Dormer windows in mansard in 6th Sty. These dormers will have metal and slate covering.

Skylights over vent shafts to be of Copper, glazed with ribbed glass, curbs to be provided with ventilating louvres, with openings or apertures = in area to area of shaft.

The Plumbing, Heating and Electrical installation is almost entirely new.

This work was begun June 4, 1915, and completed by November 5, 1915.

Walter T. Daub Architect submitted Application 2229 with drawings on July 28, 1916, for various internal alterations; but the only work completed was the reinforcing of the main wooden stairs from first through fourth stories. This work was begun on January 15, 1917.

In Application 2770 submitted October 8, 1917, Daub proposed the following alterations at an estimated cost of \$15,000. An unexcavated rear portion of the building was to be excavated, and by means of the installation of a new partition the present billiard room was to be converted to a grille room and a billiard room. This work was begun on August 4, 1919, and completed by October 22, 1919.

In 1927 architects Stasse & Barnes and the Otis Elevator Company made improvements on the existing elevator, including installation of hollow steel frames and doors to replace the wooden ones. This work was completed by October 18, 1927. A new dumbwaiter was installed by John W. Kiesling & Son, Inc., running from the first to fourth floors; this work was completed by September 22, 1948.

6. Important old views:

- a. Photograph of "Madison Avenue, South from and including n.w. corner sidewalk at 26th Street," dated 1877-78, negative 44319A, New-York Historical Society. (See HABS photocopy).
- b. "Interior of the New Union League Club House, corner of Madison Square and 26th street, New York City--Ladies' Reception on the 16th Ult." and ". . . [page torn] Ladies at the Ladies' Reception By the Union League Club, At Their New Club House, corner of Madison Square and Twenty-sixth street, N.Y., on the 16th Ult.," Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, May 9, 1868, pp. 117, 121.
- c. "New York City--The Presidential Visit--Reception Given to President and Mrs. Hayes in the Theatre of the Union League Club, Friday evening December 21st," Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, January 5, 1878, pp. 308-9.
- d. Old photograph of exterior by Brown Brothers reputedly from "Jackson's Old Files," reproduced on the cover of Gramercy Graphic, XXVI (February, 1967).
- e. Photograph of interior of the cafe at the Manhattan Club, dated 1901, in photo archive of the Museum of the City of New York. (See HABS photocopy).
- f. Photograph of Madison Square in 1909, owned by New York Public Library and reproduced in The Iconography of Manhattan Island, Vol. III, plate 168.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

This complex of buildings was built by Leonard W. Jerome, a famous banker and broker. Contemporary accounts described him as "well-known as one of our most enterprising and public-spirited citizens." Jerome was known for his lavish entertainment at the Mansion, as well as for his philanthropy. His daughter, Jennie, was the mother of Sir Winston Churchill. The Mansion was listed as the residence of the Jeromes in Trow's New York City Directory only until 1867, and they may have moved because of financial difficulties. The building was owned or "mortgaged" by them or their trustees until 1913.

On December 28, 1867, The New York Times reported that the Union League Club had agreed to a lease of the Jerome Mansion which "will cover the occupation of all buildings, now within the area so bounded--theatre and stables and the furniture as it now stands . . . ."

The formal opening of the new club house was reported thus in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, May 9, 1868:

THE NEW UNION LEAGUE CLUB  
HOUSE

The members of the Union League Club of New York City held their first reception in their new building on Thursday evening, April 16th, and were favored with a large and fashionable assembly. The spacious reception-rooms had been tastefully fitted up for the occasion, and the various apartments were enlivened by the display of national colors, relics of the war, large banks of fragrant flowers, and a superb collection of oil paintings by our leading artists. The entire building, including the theatre, was thrown open to the guests, a band of music was in attendance, and every step was taken that would add success to the occasion. The ladies, as usual, lent a very attractive air to the reception, and exhibited the most costly and superb toilets.

.....

The new Club House is situated on the corner of Madison Square and Twenty-sixth street, and was originally designed by Leonard Jerome, Esq., for the Jockey Club House, but was leased by the Union League Club previous to its completion, and fitted up according to the necessities of the patriotic organization. The building is highly attractive in its exterior view, and will bear comparison with any similar edifice in the country. The stairways are of oak, and are covered with a Wilton carpet of a neat pattern and luxurious softness. The balustrades are massive in proportions, and are capped with a handrail of black walnut. On the first floor is a commodious reading-room, fitted up with black walnut furniture, and ornamented with heavy brown-colored



rep window-hangings, edged with purple plush. Over the centre of each window, as well as on the backs of the chairs and tête-à-têtes, is the monogram, "U.L.C."

The reception Room is opposite the reading-room, and is fitted up in a corresponding manner. At the extreme end of the hallway, into which these rooms open, is a gallery set apart for the exhibition of pictures. The walls are covered with red baize, and besides the light from the windows, there is a beautiful crystal chandelier hanging from the centre of the building, to which is attached a patent arrangement, by which the most mellow light will be obtained.

Adjoining the gallery are the hat and cloak room, a spacious bowling alley, and a first-class billiard-saloon with four tables.

The second floor is set apart for dining purposes, and is divided into five compartments, each containing six tables, and affording facilities for entertaining twenty-four persons.

On the third floor is one of the most elegant apartments in the building, and is designed for the reception of distinguished personages. The furniture of this apartment is of polished black walnut, upholstered in costly style. The window draperies are of brown silk, trimmed with fringes of red velvet.

It is the intention of the Club to give in the theatre, during the year, a series of dramatic and other exhibitions, in aid of certain city charities. These performances will be gotten up under the auspices of lady friends of the Club.

On the fourth and fifth floors are a number of sleeping apartments, each containing a complete set of black walnut furniture, and an exceedingly comfortable easy-chair. From the windows on the upper floor the visitor may enjoy one of the most extensive and beautiful views of the city and suburbs, and be refreshed with a current of air of a purity seldom experienced within the city limits.

The Club have secured a lease of the building at a rental of \$18,000 per annum for ten years, with the privilege of purchasing the entire property within three years.

The Union League Club remained at the Mansion until 1881. The Metropolitan Museum of Art was founded there as a result of a meeting held in November, 1869. From 1881 to 1882 the Mansion was occupied by the Turf Club, briefly in 1883 by the Madison Club, and from 1883 to 1889 by the University Club. The last tenant, the Manhattan Club, moved into the Mansion on May 2, 1899.

#### C. Sources of Information:

##### 1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Records at the Plans Desk, Buildings Department, Municipal Building, New York, N.Y.

2. Secondary and published sources:

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A Historical Sketch of Madison Square. New York: Meriden Britannia Co., 1894.

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Levy, Florence N. American Art Annual, 1903-4. Vol. IV. New York: American Art Annual, 1903.

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Obituary for Thomas R. Jackson. The American Architect and Building News, LXXI (February 16, 1901), 49-50.

"The Old Union League House Leased by the University Club for a Term of Ten Years," The New York Times, November 22, 1883, p. 8.

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Stokes, I.N.P. The Iconography of Manhattan Island 1498-1909. Vol. III and V. New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1915.

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"The Union League Club," The New York Times, December 28, 1867, p. 8.

"The Union League Club--The New Club House--Formal Opening," The New York Times, April 1, 1868, p. 2.

Watterson, Henry. History of the Manhattan Club. New York: 1915.

Wilson, H., compiler. Trow's New York City Directory. Vol. LXXIX. New York: John F. Trow, 1865.

\_\_\_\_\_. Trow's New York City Directory. Vol. LXXX. New York: John F. Trow, 1866.

\_\_\_\_\_. Trow's New York City Directory. Vol. LXXXI. New York: John F. Trow, 1867.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural interest and merit: The Jerome Mansion is one of the few remaining examples of an upper-class New York City townhouse of the 1860's. The Mansion is actually a complex of buildings--originally residence, stables, and private theatre--and was part of the exclusive residential neighborhood surrounding Madison Square.
2. Condition of fabric: Undergoing demolition.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Number of stories: The house is four stories with two levels of dormers in the mansard roof. The stables are three stories, and the connecting section two-and-one-half stories.
2. Over-all dimensions: The entire building, which is rectangular in plan, extends approximately 49'-4" on Madison

Avenue and 175'-0" on East 26th Street. The facade of the house on East 26th Street is five bays wide, and the side of the house on Madison Avenue is three bays wide. The stables are three bays wide, and the connecting section consists of one bay.

3. Wall construction, finish, and color: In the house the first two stories are of rusticated stone courses; in the stables the first two stories are of stone with rusticated pilasters. The third and fourth stories of the house and the third story of the stables are of brick laid up in common bond and painted red. The connecting section is entirely of stone with simple, inscribed ornament in the spandrels. There are stone courses between the third and fourth floors and immediately below the cornice of the house; and between the first and second, and the second and third floor levels, and below the cornice of the stables. There are stone pilasters at each corner of the house on the third and fourth floors.
4. Stairway: An unprotected, single flight of stairs leads from the sidewalk level of the connecting section to the basement.
5. Chimneys: Pairs of red brick chimneys are located between the second and third and between third and fourth bays of the house. There are two chimneys on the west party wall and one chimney on the east party wall of the stables, although markings on the party wall indicate that at one time there were two chimneys on the east wall.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors:
    1. The house: The only entrance is in the central bay at the first floor level. Framing each side of the doorway are two engaged pilasters with egg-and-dart molding and with a very narrow window between the pilasters. There are two doors, each with a wooden lower panel and a single-paned glass upper panel. At either side of these doors is a one-over-one light window with wooden panel beneath. There is a transom above the doorway.
    2. The stables: In both end bays a large, arched doorway with voluted keystone has been converted into a window with an iron grille at sidewalk level. These windows have fixed sash with stained glass panes.
  - b. Windows:
    1. The house: The first floor windows are topped by a flat stone lintel cut to resemble voussoirs and key-

stone. On the second story level on both facades in each bay except the center bays there is a pair of round-headed windows with one-over-one light double hung sash, separated by pilasters. In the center bay of the north (front) facade is a group of four round-headed windows with one-over-one light double hung sash. In the center bay of the west facade is a window with one-over-one light double hung sash. On the third story level are windows with one-over-one light double hung sash and with triangular stone pediments and stone balusters. The center bay of the north facade has a modified Palladian window with one-over-one light double hung sash and stone balusters. On both facades at the fourth story level are bull's eye windows with ornamental stone surrounds; on the north facade there are also two square windows to each side of the center bay.

2. The stables: On the first floor the windows have stained glass panes and are partly boarded up. There is one window to each side of the former doorways in the end bays, and there are two in the center bay. On the second floor in the center bay are two round-headed windows with two-over-two light double hung sash and transom above; to each side is a rectangular window. In the end bays are two round-headed windows with one-over-one light double hung sash. On the third floor in the center bay there are two windows with one-over-one light double hung sash and stone balusters and architraves with vaulted brackets. In the end bays there are windows with stone balusters and segmental pediments; these windows have one-over-one light triple hung sash.
3. The connecting section: There is a large arch on the first floor level that may have once been a doorway, but is now a window. Within this large arch are two smaller arches with circle above; to each side are engaged pilasters. On the second story level are three bays of round-headed windows with two-over-two light double hung sash, and a fanlight. These windows are separated by carved, ornamental pilasters.

Throughout the building all door and window trim is of wood, painted brown.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The house has a slate shingled mansard roof. The stables and connecting section have flat roofs covered with sheet metal.

b. Cornice: The cornice of the house has voluted double brackets between each of the bays on the west facade and single brackets on the north facade. The stables have a bracketed cornice which continues to form the pediment. These cornices are wooden and painted brown. The connecting section has a stone cornice.

c. Dormers:

1. The house: There are two tiers of wooden dormers. The first level consists of lancet-arched dormers with round-headed windows, except for the center bays. The center bay on the west facade has a modified lancet-arched dormer with two round-headed windows flanked by two rectangular windows; the center dormer on the north facade is similar except that there are four rectangular windows. On the second level above each bay except the center bays there are single dormers with segmental-arched faces and round-headed windows. Over the center bay of the north facade there are two of these same dormers; and over the center bay of the west facade there is a large, segmental-arched dormer. All windows have one-over-one light double hung sash.
2. The connecting section: A row of four windows with four-over-four light double hung sash forms a dormer window that extends nearly the width of the third floor level.

C. Description of Interior:

Note: Because demolition work was at an advanced stage at the time of this report, it was possible to obtain only a very brief look at the first floor.

1. Floor plan: The front doors open into an entrance hall, with a U-shaped stairway leading to the second floor on the south wall; to each side of the entrance on the north wall is a small vestibule. Opening off the west side of the entrance hall is a large room running the width of the building. A wide hall leads off the entrance hall to the east. On the south side of this hall, directly adjacent to the stairway, is an elevator; to the east of the elevator is a single room with arched opening. On the north side of this hall is a room with openings from both the hall and the east side of the foyer. At the east end of this hall is an arched opening into the connecting section, which consists of one room, two stories high with a balcony at the second floor level connecting the house with the stables. Two doorways at first floor level along the east wall of the connecting section open into the stables. The stables are divided by a partition running from east to west. The north portion consists of one large

single space and the southern section of several smaller rooms. Along the east wall is a stairway running to the second floor.

2. Stairways: The main stairway opposite the entrance has columns and pilasters of tan marble with black veins. The balusters had been removed.
3. Flooring: The floor is concrete, covered in the entrance hall with modern black and white tiles.
4. Wall finish: In the hallway of the house the walls are covered with black marble with white veins.
5. Doorways: In the hallway and foyer of the house the doorway mouldings are of tan marble with black veins.
6. Lighting: Electrical, but former gas outlets are visible in the ceiling of the large room to the west of the entrance hall.

D. Site and Surroundings:

1. Orientation and general setting: The facades of the stables and of the connecting section and entrance facade of the house face north; the west facade of the house fronts on Madison Square, a residential park.
2. Sidewalks: Sidewalks of both stone and concrete are contiguous on the north side, but on the west are separated from the house by an iron fence.

Prepared by Diana S. Waite  
Architectural Historian  
February, 1968